

What Makes a Difference - Surgeon, Hospital or Both?

There is an additional issue that must be considered and several questions that should be taken into account in using this report. What is more important, the volume of procedures performed by the surgeon, the volume of procedures performed in the hospital, or both? The skill and experience of the physician are, of course, highly important to the quality of care and “good outcomes.” However while the individual surgeon performs surgery, a surgical team (or at least a surgical assistant) assists with the procedure. In addition there are a wide array of hospital services and personnel that impact on the surgical outcome that may not be evident or considered.

For example, while a patient may undergo a procedure performed in the most skillful way by a surgeon and the surgical team, post-operative care of a surgical incision may result in a preventable infection if infection control techniques are not followed. Such practices may result in less-than-optimum outcomes, though the quality of the surgery was excellent. Those aspects of care provided under the supervision of the hospital, as well as the performance of the surgeon, are important to quality care.

While data on procedure volume by physician are not available for analysis and publication, it is possible to examine patient data that are routinely reported by hospitals to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, to determine the facility-level volume for procedures. This report focuses on the volume of selected procedures, as reported by general, acute care hospitals across the state.

Keep in mind – our medical knowledge is always expanding!

As part of its public health mission, the Department of Health and Senior Services feels that evidence-based information disclosures in consumer guides are in the public interest. In selecting the procedures reviewed for this report, we took into account a number of research studies, the strength of the evidence, the source of the study, and input from national and state experts. In addition, a statewide advisory committee reviewed the development of this report. Over time, new information may provide further insight on the volume to outcome relationship for these procedures. The information contained in this report is the best available at this time.

Comparing hospitals to make a decision on where you should have a procedure performed can be a difficult and complex decision. An informed health care consumer gathers all the relevant information available to make these important decisions. Additional information, such as the hospital's proximity to one's home or the home of relatives and friends, travel time, insurance coverage, cost, alternative new technologies, the hospital and surgeon's reputation in the community are examples of the many factors that consumers may also want to take into account. This report, when used in conjunction with these other considerations, and discussed with a trusted personal physician, can help you make an informed health care decision for yourself or a family member.

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